

Standard USHC-8: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the impact of World War II on United States' foreign and domestic policies.

USHC-8.4 Summarize the responses of the United States and the Allies to war crimes, including the Holocaust and war crimes trials. (H)

Taxonomy Level: 2B Understand /Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

In the 7th grade, students summarized the Holocaust and its impact on European society and Jewish culture, including Nazi policies to eliminate the Jews and other minorities, the “Final Solution,” and the war crimes trials at Nuremberg (7-5.6).

In the Global Studies, students were required to exemplify the lasting impact of World War II, including the legacy of the Holocaust (GS-5.6).

It is essential for the students to know:

German action against the Jews was part of the Nazi propaganda machine and was based on both Social Darwinism and longstanding prejudice against the Jews. Anti-Semitism became the official policy of the German government in the early 1930s with the Nuremberg Laws, which restricted the rights of Jews in Germany and culminated with the **Holocaust**, Hitler's effort to rid Europe of its entire Jewish population. The program of genocide carried out by the German government resulted in the extermination of 6 million Jews and 5.5 million others.

Before the end of the war, the **response of the United States and the Allies** was severely limited. Although passage of the Nuremberg laws and the organized attacks on Jews such as *Kristallnacht* were widely reported, little action was taken by the world community to stop the Nazis. Immigration laws were not eased to grant asylum to Jewish refugees. No military action was taken to interrupt the shipment of people to the death camps. As the war ended, the death camps of the Final Solution horrified the soldiers who liberated these camps and the public. The Allies responded to the war crimes committed during World War II by Adolph Hitler and the German Nazis by identifying war criminals and putting them on public trial. At the **Nuremberg War Crimes Trials**, 24 Nazi officers and civilians were charged with crimes against humanity. Although many pleaded that they were “just following orders,” the conviction and death sentence of 12 Nazis demonstrated that individuals are responsible for their own actions. The Nuremberg trials established the precedent for future trials on war crimes. It has not, however, brought an end to genocide.

The establishment of the state of Israel after the war, the prompt recognition by the United States of Israel and the U.S.'s continuing support for Israel in the Middle East are a result of the impact of German war crimes on the conscience of the world and of the United States.

It is not essential for the students to know:

Students do not need to know the details of the United States policy towards Jewish immigrants before the outbreak of the war, including the rejection of the *St Louis* passengers. They do not need to understand the controversy over the lack of American effort during the war to stop the death camps. They do not need to know the details of the war crimes trials nor the names of those who were tried and convicted. They do not need to know specifics about other examples of genocide such as the Armenian massacre of the 1920s, the actions of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia in the 1970s, the ‘ethnic cleansing’ committed during the civil war in Bosnia, the slaughter in Rwanda in the 1990s, or the Darfur crisis today.

Assessment guidelines:

Appropriate assessments would require students to be able to **summarize** the world's response to the Final Solution, **infer** the effectiveness of the war crimes trials as a deterrent to future actions, and **explain** the reason for the establishment of, and American support for, the state of Israel.

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